



Rep. Jan Shabro

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Representative Jan Shabro

2004 Session Update

February 2004

Dear Friends,

The Legislature began January 12, and the scheduled 60-day session will be fast-paced and intense. We will be working to solve many critical issues, all geared toward restoring our state's economy, putting people back to work, and restoring public trust in government.

To help accomplish our goals my colleagues in the House Republican will work to advance an agenda of policy proposals and strategies aimed at sharpening the state's competitive edge, encouraging business growth and creating new employment opportunities.

My top priorities for the 2004 legislative session are:

- Maintaining a fiscally responsible state budget
- Continuing to create and retain jobs for Washingtonians
- Ensuring educational opportunities for students
- Providing relief from rising insurance rates because of unjust lawsuits
- Adopting a primary election system that will preserve choice for voters

This newsletter will provide you with information on these issues as well as important contact information so that you may reach me in Olympia. Remember, I am here to represent your views.

If you have questions or concerns about the issues I am working on, please give me a call, or write to me. I'm always glad to hear from you, and welcome your thoughts and ideas.

Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving as your state Representative.

Sincerely,

Jan Shabro
State Representative
31st District

**31st District
Town Hall Meeting**
info inside

Representative Jan Shabro

HOLDING THE LINE ON SPENDING

This session we will adopt a supplemental budget which makes adjustments to the budget passed last year that accounts for unanticipated spending such as higher increases in school enrollment, flooding or forest fires. **The governor has proposed a short-sighted supplemental budget that uses at least \$158 million in one-time money to pay for new, ongoing expenditures. His proposal would leave only \$172 million in reserve.** It's like having a penny saved for an emergency when you need at least a dollar. I believe his approach abandons the progress we fought so hard to make last year. The governor's budget proposal would spend down our reserves to a dangerous level, and if enacted, would leave Washington more than \$1 billion in the red by next biennium. Irresponsible budgeting practices such as this, is precisely the reason our state had to dig its way out of an enormous budget deficit last year.

I'll continue to stand firm against new taxes and unnecessary spending. It is critical for the Legislature to hold the line on state spending and stay the course on fiscal responsibility. We fought hard during the 2003 session to close a \$2.7 billion budget deficit without increasing taxes. We can't move away from this approach at a time when we are just beginning to see an improvement in our state's economic situation. If we go back to a spendthrift mentality, we risk an increase in taxes and deep cuts in services for the people who truly need government assistance. That is simply unacceptable. We must adopt a responsible, sustainable budget that protects taxpayers.



CREATING AND RETAINING JOBS FOR WASHINGTONIANS

We made progress during the 2003 session toward improving our state's business climate, including an overhaul of the unemployment insurance system, reforms to workers' compensation, and passage of a no-new-taxes budget – all of which proves that when the Legislature comes together in a bi-partisan manner we can create a more positive environment in which jobs can be created and retained. Our efforts helped Washington move from second place to fifth place among states with the greatest unemployment. We still have much to do. We must remain focused and committed to getting Washington back on track.



ENSURING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

The students in our K-12 education system represent the hopes and dreams of our future. We must strengthen our schools and provide our students with a world-class education because we want the best for our kids. To accomplish this we need to allow districts to create opportunity schools and reduce the impact of teacher strikes on students.

Opportunity schools are a new model of public schools that provide more flexibility to operate mission-driven schools in exchange for increased accountability. Washington students and their parents deserve to have charter schools as an option when making educational choices. This is particularly true for at-risk kids who struggle in a traditional setting. When given a chance in the right environment with increased opportunities, accountability and parent involvement of the kind that opportunity schools provide, success is a part of their future.

The recent Marysville teachers' strike was a vivid reminder of how little is achieved when teachers decide to walk out of the classrooms. After the longest teacher strike in

state history, nothing was resolved and students suffered greatly. The Legislature must clarify that teacher strikes are illegal. In addition, I will be working on other options to address teacher strikes. It is unacceptable for the education of our children – the paramount duty of the state – to be placed at the mercy of labor disputes.



Rep. Shabro takes time to visit with local student Michael Catalano, who served as an honorary page for the House of Representatives.

2004 Session Update

REPLACING OUR PRIMARY VOTING SYSTEM



As a member of the House State Government committee, I have spent the past several months researching a variety of voting systems in an effort to find a successor to Washington's blanket primary election system; which was declared unconstitutional last fall. The Legislature will be debating this issue, with the focus on variations of the primary systems used in other states.

Ultimately, our primary system must respect the coveted right to privacy our state's voters cherish so passionately. If there is one message I hear overwhelmingly — it would be to preserve the citizens' right to vote for the best person on the ballot regardless of party affiliation. Voting is the cornerstone of our democracy, so it is important that we adopt legislation that meets the needs of the people. Two of the models being discussed this session are:

- **Modified blanket primary** (*Louisiana-style*) – would maintain the right of voters to vote for any candidate on the ballot regardless of party and then permit the top two candidates to move to the general election regardless of their party affiliation. This means there could be two members of the same party running against each other during the general election.
- **Open primary** (*Montana-style*) – would limit voters to a ballot listing candidates from one party only and permit the top vote getters on each party ballot to move forward. A voter's choice of ballot would either be recorded (the "public" version) or not recorded (the "private" version).

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Please join
Rep. Jan Shabro
for a 31st District
Town Hall Meeting

Date:
February 21

Locations:
Enumclaw Library
10:30 – 11:30 am
Auburn Library
1:00 – 2:00 pm
Sumner Library
3:30 – 4:30 pm

PROVIDING RELIEF FROM SKYROCKETING INSURANCE RATES

Many people think of liability reform in terms of the medical industry. And it's no wonder: escalating medical malpractice premiums are forcing many health care providers to close their doors. But the same holds true for almost every other industry. Employers everywhere are **struggling to pay skyrocketing premiums** to protect themselves against lawsuits.

Because this problem is affecting so many people, there is rising public support for sensible liability reform that puts limits on non-economic damages (damages not directly related to the injury). A study of Washington voters by two independent research firms recently found 70 percent of the voters surveyed believe awards for non-economic damages are excessive, and 72 percent support limiting damages. Nearly 60 percent of those polled believe personal injury lawsuits are hurting the economy and making Washington a less attractive place to do business.

Small businesses are the backbone of our state's economy with 76 percent of Washingtonians working for small businesses. Many employees can't get health care coverage because it's too expensive for their employers. Despite the growing ranks of people covered by state-funded health plans, the situation has become so dire the number of uninsured in our state has risen to nearly 17 percent, up from 11 percent a decade ago. There are more lower- and middle-class working Washingtonians without insurance than ever before – in large part, because there are too many government rules that tell health insurers what they must put in their health plans.

I am committed to enacting legislation which would **rein in out-of-control lawsuits and reduce the number of government required for small-group insurance providers.**





Please
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here



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I WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!

Since we have only 60 days, time is critical! Please let me know how you feel about the primary election system and what your top three priorities are for the Legislature. *Refold with return mail panel showing and send it back to me. Thank you!*

Based on the two primary election models I outlined inside, which would you support?

- ☐ **Modified blanket primary**
- ☐ **Open primary**

Please tell me YOUR top priorities for 2004

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Other ways to get information and assistance:
I would be happy to speak to your group, organization or school.

- Topics might include:
- Issues before the Legislature
 - How does the legislative process work?
 - What it's like to be a legislator
 - Issues specific to the 31st legislative district

Ask for assistance. Legislators are elected to serve you. If you are facing challenges working with a state agency, contact me to see if I can help.



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